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A PLEA FOR STUDY.

AN

ORATION

BEFORE

THE LITERARY SOCIETIES

OF

YALE COLLEGE,

AUGUST 19, 1845.

BY

GEORGE W. BETHUNE,

Minister of the Third Reformed Dutch Church of Philadelphia.

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Yale University, Aug. 20th, 1845.

SIR,

In accordance with a joint resolution passed by the three Literary Societies of Yale College, the undersigned would express to you the sincere thanks of the members thereof for the very able and instructive Oration which you pronounced before them yesterday, and respectfully solicit a copy of the same for publication.

Your obedient servants,

L. E. WALES,

W. S. EAKIN,

Committee of the Calliopean.

GEORGE CANNING HILL,

H. T. STEELE,

Committee of the Linonian.

THOS. KENNEDY,

C. H. TRASK,

Committee of the Brothers in Unity.

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*Philadelphia, September 1st, 1845.*

GENTLEMEN,

I am happy to learn that my attempt to serve the Societies whom you represent, on the 19th ultimo, was acceptable to them. It was my wish to defend Study, particularly of the Classics, against objections sometimes urged by honest, though mistaken, religious persons; and, also, to offer the student such counsel as I felt myself warranted in giving, from my own experience. For the same reasons, I cheerfully comply with the request to permit the publication of the Address, though in style and structure it can scarcely be called an Oration, except through your courtesy. I have added a few notes and references, on the principle of doing as I would be done by, as I always thank an author for putting me on the track of his reading, that I may, if inclined, follow it myself.

With my best wishes for the welfare of your several Societies, and my best thanks for your own personal attentions to myself,

I have the honour to be,

Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

GEO. W. BETHUNE.

MESSRS. L. E. WALES,

W. S. EAKIN,

GEO. CANNING HILL,

H. T. STEELE,

THOS. KENNEDY,

C. H. TRASK.



## ORATION.

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GENTLEMEN,

Rising, at your flattering request, to speak before such an assemblage, as THE LITERARY SOCIETIES OF YALE COLLEGE, your orator adopts, with all their force, the earnest words of Ringelbergius :—"Happy young men, trained from very childhood, under the best masters, in various learning, to whom belong the blooming cheek, the pliant limb, a hope of many years, and an unworn energy, would that I could share the freshness of your morning, and seek, with a vigour like yours, those heights of knowledge, which now, from early neglect, are beyond my reach! Vain are my regrets. Let me solace them by exhorting you to persevere in the difficult, but honourable labours of a studious life, labours whose success is certain, as their rewards are glorious."\*

Our discourse will, therefore, be upon

STUDY;

a theme beyond his powers, whose distinguished office it is to address you; yet, inspiring courage

\* I. Fortii Ringelbergii Lib. De Ratione Studii.



from this classical atmosphere, he feels sure, in his well-meant efforts, of a courteous sympathy. Under the shadow of your venerable University, founded by ancient piety and edified by the good of many generations, crowded by aspirants to scholarship from every part of our wide confederacy, and illustrated by the lives of professors as eminent for every virtue as they are excellent in every science, the most humble lover of Christian learning may bring his tribute to a cause, identified with the name of YALE.

But do they, who have been blessed by the liberal nurture of your ALMA MATER, need incitement to pursue study so delightfully begun? Is not the day, on which they receive her parting blessing, rightly named a Commencement, because then, obeying her last affectionate words, they commence, *baculum in manu*, those higher walks of truth, for whose steep ascents she has carefully disciplined their growing faculties? Can we think it possible, that any, who have here known the pleasures of intellect, will ever be seduced by the earthward and imbruting temptations of a vulgar world?

These doubts have a melancholy answer from the past; for by far the greatest part of those, whose advantages should have made them lights to mankind, shining brighter and brighter, are lost in disgraceful obscurity, become slaves of the mine, mere delvers after gain, or drag their way through life mortally tainted with sloth, the leprosy of soul.



A college course may be compared to the fabled regions below. Many feel themselves chained down by iron rules, the vulture impatience gnawing at their liver; or are whirled round, like Ixion, by a routine of unwilling exercises; or pour lessons into memories, leaky as the sieves of the Danaides; or strive in vain to taste enjoyments, which tantalize the appetite of their feeble minds; or, most industriously,

“With many a weary step and many a groan,”

heave up the mass of their accumulating tasks until they reach a bachelor's degree, to let it run down again, and to run down after it, congratulating themselves over Sisyphus, that they may stay at the bottom. A fortunate few find here an Elysium, where they hold high converse with the mighty dead, and emerge, like Æneas, wise from their counsels, to lay the foundation of an influence more enduring than “eternal Rome.” Such spirits, at least, will listen to an advocate of Study.

STUDY, in its wide meaning, signifies, Zeal in acquiring knowledge of any kind, by any method; but, leaving those, more conversant with them, to recommend other sciences, our plea is for Letters, especially, Letters which reveal the experience, the taste, and the mind of antiquity.

Study abounds in religious uses. It is a scruple

of a sickly conscience, that our immediate duties are so many, as to forbid us time for such occupation. The true end of life is preparation for eternity, and religion ought to have our supreme regard. But what is religion? Is it not the study of God, of our fellow creatures and of ourselves, and the intelligent practice of our duties to all? God is our best Teacher, and how does he instruct us? He has not, in his book, taught us only of Himself, nor confined the text to mere statements of doctrine, bare precepts and direct promises. The Scriptures are full of man's history, the strange workings of the human heart in the conduct of nations and individuals, the miserable consequences of departure from primeval religion, and the peaceful results of righteousness. It is not presumption to inquire after God, for "the knowledge of the Holy is understanding;" but he has taught us, also, that man is the proper study of man. Whatever exhibits human nature, shows us ourselves.

The style of the Scriptures is not bare and meagre. Simplicity of narrative, pathos and grandeur of description, eloquence, argument, philosophy, poetry, imagery, apothegm, maxim, proverb, are all there; and each inspired writer has a genius, with its correspondent manner, peculiar to himself. Study of the Bible awakens a taste for letters, and sanctions by infallible example, a cultivation of those arts

which the scholar loves for the delight and power they give him.

God teaches us by his works. He has not formed them after the narrow scheme of a misnomered utilitarianism. There are the rugged, the barren, and the dreary; but how far excelling in number and extent, are the graceful, the changeful, the wonderful and the bright! How lavish has he been of trees, and shrubs, and herbs, and flowers, moulding their anatomy and painting their leaves with infinite skill! Mountain and valley, hill and dale and plain, forest and meadow, brook and river and lake and sea, combine their contrasts to adorn the fruitful earth for the dwelling of its innumerable tribes. Above us, the clouds, dark, fleecy or gorgeous, of every shape, sweep over the face of heaven, or hang around the horizon, or, passing away, leave the blue vault magnificent with the garniture of sun and moon and planet and constellation. They all have their uses; but is their beauty, with our faculty to perceive and to feel it, of no use; an extravagance of the Creator, a profuseness of bounty, from which we must abstain in a self-denial more prudent than the kindness of God? Let the cold, dull plodder, who, intent on his creeping steps, fears to look up and delight himself in that which God delights in, study the lyrics of David, the rhapsodies of holy prophets, and the illustrated sermons of his Lord.

The greatest divine work within our observation

is man; man is most wonderful in his soul, and Letters are the development of the human soul by its own actings. They open to us a world, a universe, more vast than material creation, not the less instructive, because the free attributes of the moral creature are permitted to modify the original economy. The evil of man is his own, his perverted passions and calamitous errors of theory and practice; but the goodness, the wisdom, and power of man, is the manifestation of God in his creature, and thus does the operation of evil itself, assist us to know the infallibility of that Supreme Will, whence no evil could ever emanate; which is the principal lesson of Scriptures, written by "holy men of old as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Every fact, discovered in the aggregate experience of all former times, confirms the testimony of revelation to the necessity of that piety, which God has pronounced our highest good.

As we read the classic pages of poet, orator, historian and philosophical inquirer, we are surprised by a beauty, sweetness and sublimity, far more exquisite than any external things, which refine and elevate our spiritual perceptions. If it be not denied us to gather the perishing flowers, to hear the music and contemplate the scenery, which God prepares for our senses, that we may derive from them pleasure and advantage; may we not enjoy with profit the bloom, the melody, the grace, the tenderness,

the incomparable grandeur and illimitable range of thought, which distinguishes man from grosser being, and admits him to an adoring communion with the Father of Spirits?

There is a sphere of life promised to the Christian, where matter has no place, and, by an inscrutable mystery, the bodies of the redeemed are etherealized into spiritual substance; where exist those ideal realities, of which sensible things are but the fleeting shadows; and truth, and joy, and love, and praise, are known, and felt, and uttered, by thought alone, unseen, intangible, unheard, as the essence of God and the souls of his happy children. In that deep silence harmonies are ever rolling; over those invisible regions eternal beauty is outspread, and there, untrammelled by the impediments of matter, spirits hold fellowship with spirits, in an activity so pure and free, that inspiration has described it by perfect **REST.**

The outward engagements, which religion demands of us here, are, in their place and degree, a discipline preparatory to heaven; but we cannot fulfil them aright, nor is our education progressive, except as we learn to free our souls from the degradation of sense, by uplifting them to the world of thought; and find there a vigour and satisfaction, independent of all lower things. This is the work of Study. When we bend over the volume, a miraculous power suspends the laws, which separate us



from the distant and the past. The scholar from far-off lands sits at our side; the sages of far antiquity live again in their deathless words; they speak a silent language, whose tones shall stir the hearts of generations long to come. O then it is that we feel ourselves to be immortal; citizens of an imperishable universe, and, yielding reason, staggered by the vastness of her destiny, to the stronger virtue of faith, return to walk through earth, pilgrims whose aim is a better country, the paradise of the soul.

But some may ask, Why study particularly the ancients, when we have in modern learning all the advantages of their labours, increased and corrected by researches under the light of Christianity?

The objection would be of more force, if the moderns had always sought to rectify, by evangelical assistance, the errors of antiquity. Unhappily, however, since the early time when professed rhetoricians and teachers of philosophy became fathers and doctors of the church, there has been a strong tendency to engraft upon the true and living vine of Christ's planting, subtleties and abstractions from the Grecian and Egyptian schools. Men, converted to the new faith in middle life, retained the bent and methods of philosophising, acquired under masters who knew not of Jesus; nor could the mind of the world be turned readily out of channels, in which it had flowed for ages. An acci-



dental similarity of some terms in the apostolical writings to those of the philosophers, and an imaginary identity between some Academic theories and certain Christian doctrines, with an abuse of the Aristotelian dialectics, contributed largely to the adulteration of that wisdom which came directly from above, pure, original and unique. To this day, indeed now more than for centuries, Plato and Plotinus are made interpreters of the sacred epistles; wild, if not profane dreams of the Emanative system, at utter variance with the Bible, which declares all but God to have been *created*, are enthusiastically advocated from the pulpit, as well as the press; nay, the stoic scheme of reproduction after the fiery close of a Providential cycle, is more than quoted in supposed illustration of literal prophecy. We are often startled by the walking ghosts of long buried notions from the limbo of heathenism, not the less recognisable by the scholar, because wearing a Geneva cloak, an Oxford surplice, or a cross-embroidered vestment. On the other hand, the astute infidel, encouraged by this actual, though unintentional, veiling of Divine instruction to the competency of unaided reason, has, by a pernicious skill, cited the past to prove the unnecessariness of Revelation for the knowledge of that, which God only has made, or could make, manifest. Thus, by the folly of its friends, who have literally "gone down to Egypt for help," and the bold cunning of its enemies, who strike strongly against

the polemic, that has flung away the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit to wield weapons of man's forging, the Gospel is put in a false position, from which no human means, under God, can extricate it, but sanctified learning.

There is not one modern theory, which has not been constructed, as the later Romans build their houses, with materials taken from ancient ruins; every great metaphysical dispute, now agitated, has a source more early than history can reach; nor is it possible to reason correctly backward, through the confusion of multiplied eclecticism, to the errors which those, who, departing from the faith given by God to man at the beginning, and "professing to be wise, became fools," have mingled with that primeval revelation. There is (blessed be the Almighty Comforter!) a divine witness in the Gospel itself, more convincing than any corroborative testimony; but, except we deem valueless the confirmation of experience, and leave all the results of past inquiry to the perversions of skeptics, we must study the learning of antiquity, before we can fairly vindicate the necessity and excellence of that system, which we have received from the Holy Ghost. It is, when, after thorough search, we fail to discover in ancient books, except the Bible, a logical argument for the Being of God or the immortality of the soul, stronger than a general tradi-

tionary notion;\* or any scheme of philosophy, which could account for the existence of matter, antagonist to spirit, and limiting even the will of the One they called Supreme;† and far back as we go, we see clearer and yet more clear traces of an early God-taught knowledge, (fragments of which believed in, though unproved, because, as Plato says, they were learned by children at the breast,‡ from mothers and nurses among barbarians as well as Greeks, constitute whatever is genuine in their elaborate and labyrinthine speculations,) that we are ready to bow with a more humble trust at the feet of the Crucified, who made all things and upholds them, revealed life and immortality by the radiance which shone through his broken tomb, and now, as at first he commanded light to shine out of darkness, shines in the hearts of his people, the brightness of his Father's glory and the character of invisible God.

\* Ut pono, *firmissimum* hoc aferri videtur cun Deos esse credamus, quod nulla gens tam fera, nemo omnium tam sit immanis, ejus mentem non imbuert Deorum opinio; et seq.—Tusc.<sup>o</sup> Quæs. 1, c. 13.

† Citations would be superfluous (had we room) to show, that no scheme of ancient philosophy made matter otherwise than eternal. Matter could not be accounted for by *emanation* from The ONE, and, therefore, it was impossible for them to consider it entirely subject to His will. Creation, in our sense of the term, *out of nothing*, is not to be found in any of their conjectures. Here is a radical distinction from the doctrine of the Scriptures, which renders the Platonic theory utterly irreconcilable with our faith. Should any one be disposed to quote the *Timæus* against us, he will find himself sufficiently answered by Brucker. *Hist. Phil.* Vol. I. p. 676-7.

‡ . . . περθόμενοι τοῖς μύθοις, οὓς ἐκ νέων παίδων ἔτι ἐν γάλαξιν τρεφόμενοι τροφῶν τε ἤκουον καὶ μητέρων. κ. τ. λ. ΝΟΜΟΙ, I.

It is only by a careful study of the ancients themselves that we can know how poor were their best thoughts of divinity; how dim and comfortless their expectations after death; how various and conflicting their definitions of the right and the good; how cold their morality, which, merging all affection in wisdom, accounted the poor man, the labourer, and the uncultivated, as profane, mere slaves of the initiated; how insufficient their motives to uphold them against present temptation; and, at least in one instance, but that the most available for our purpose which could be given, how deep their conviction of dependence upon a Teacher from heaven,\* to show us how to live, and how to pray, and what to hope for. Then are we prepared to resist the Platonist, who, intoxicated with the poetical romancings of the sublime idealist, would persuade us that we are gods, knowing good and evil; or, after a contest with him upon his own instruments, flay the Marsyas-like skeptic, who dares to match his skill against the Divine. If the swan of Egina, forsaking the safer bosom of his more modest master, never reached by his boldest flight the cardinal fact, which a Christian child reads in the first verse of his Bible, what worth to us can be theories based upon the fable of emanation? If an apostle of our Lord has encouraged us when we lack wisdom to ask of God, with what pa-

\* Αναγκαῖον οὖν ἐστὶ περὶ μένειν ἕως ἄν τις μάθῃ ὡς δεῖ πρὸς θεοῦ καὶ πρὸς ἀνθρώπου διακρίσθαι. κ. τ. λ. AAKIB. ΔΕΥΤ. § 22.



tience can we listen to men, who bid us search and find within our sinful, creature souls, a microcosm of all ideas? If Socrates, the best of the ancients, while expecting a new revelation, contented himself with gathering and separating from the rubbish of superstition, the golden particles of truth washed down to him by the traditionary stream; and Aristotle, the greatest, never showed his unequalled sagacity more than in abstaining altogether from questions of religious import; and Cicero, after sitting as umpire over a congress of all sects, pronounced the atheist's argument most true, hoping against logic that religion might be found probable;\* how ineffably ridiculous is the vanity of men, who, turning their backs upon the Sun of Righteousness, which nevertheless will shine around them, boast that they can demonstrate by their puny wit what those giant intellects could not discover!

Were they, who rebuke us for these studies, as inconsistent with more active piety, to consider how much of our common and most necessary religious privileges have been derived, under God, from such learning, the tone of their rash and ungrateful criminations would be less positive. The very Scriptures, which they hold justly to be the fountain of saving truth, were written in tongues to them unknown, and, at first in scattered pieces, have reached us

\* . . . ita discessimus, ut Velleio Cottæ disputatio *verior*, mihi Balbi *ad veritatis similitudinem propensior*.—De Natura Deorum III. 40.

through long ages, and, until the art of printing, by the uncertain hands of transcribers. They have many passages, which, had we no acquaintance with the history, customs, opinions and idioms of their time, would be utterly inexplicable; so that to translate them, much more to establish the canon, to verify the text and elucidate it fully, demanded, and still demands, extensive erudition and severe literary discipline. To open the paths of heavenly wisdom for the little feet of the Sunday scholar, mountains have been levelled and valleys filled up, crooked places made straight and rough places plain, by the stupendous labours of indefatigable minds, who employed the skill and strength which study only could give, in preparing the way of the Lord to preach his Gospel to the poor. Shall it be lightly said, that the hours they spent investigating the secrets of language, comparing the various operations of thought, and observing the influence of national and individual peculiarities, were wasted; though to accomplish themselves for their work, it was necessary to range through all heathen literature, biography and history, eloquence and philosophy, epic, lyric, tragedy and comedy, from the oldest Orphic fragment to the memoranda of Gellius, the gossip of the Deipnosophists, and that last link in the chain of Hermes, the problems of Proclus? With very few exceptions (perhaps only one, the glorious old dreamer, Bunyan,) since the days of the apostles,



the servants of God, whatever may have been their immediate usefulness, have left an influence upon the church and the world lasting and wide in proportion as their zeal was seconded by learning. Who will challenge the services of Luther, profoundly versed in ancient wisdom, and Melancthon (*ille Germaniæ suæ magister, omnis doctrinæ præsidio instructus, divinis humanisque literis ornatus\**), whose eloquent exhortations to the study of the classics have accompanied the Augsburg Confession to us; of Calvin and Rivet, whose Ciceronian periods enchant the scholar as much as their matchless divinity edifies the saint; of Zuingle, an editor of Pindar, and Piscator, a translator of Horace; of Grotius, teacher of all moral science, and the elder Vossius, worthy of being named with his great compatriot; of Owen, Baxter, and Howe, each thoroughly bred to the use of books; of Matthew Henry, whose apt quotations show a stretch of reading which, from his modest quaintness, we might not otherwise have suspected, and Doddridge, whose style betrays early familiarity with classic models; of Lardner and Warburton, who heaped the spoil of the Gentiles in the temple of the Lord, and of many others, not to speak of those in our own day and in our own land, honoured alike by the erudite and the good? Was their piety, because of their learning, less active or less useful, than

\* Jo. Alberti Oratio de Poesi Theologis utili.

that of those who cannot take a step in Christian duty, but leaning on their help? Can we be wrong in attempting to follow their examples?

Temptations there may be, there are, in a studious life, which have led astray many an unhappy mind. But where is there not temptation? Is the Christian in the counting-house, the work-shop or the field, free from it? Does the devil triumph more in the retirement of a library than in the squabbles of ecclesiastical councils, where the most empty are always the most noisy; or in those mischievous excitements, like that of Israel before Horeb, when impatient to get on, they set up a god of Egypt to counterfeit the presence of Jehovah? A difficult, but useful book, is no bad charm to lay those evil spirits, who love the dry and desert places of ignorance far more than a well-filled and busy head; and if we cannot force out the tempter by reading, we may try, as Luther did, what virtue there is in an inkstand. A Christian man, with a good thought in his brain and a pen in his hand, is more than a match for a legion of such, as would drive a swinish multitude down a precipice into a sea of absurdity, fanaticism or crime.

Defective as was their knowledge of divine things and of physical science (though our pride in that has been not a little shaken by recent searches among their monuments), it is notorious that we are far behind the ancients in many other respects. The mo-

derns have written much upon government, the laws of thought, rhetoric and criticism, but their rules and examples are chiefly drawn from the standards of classic ages; and every faithful student knows by experience, how much more can be learned from actual conversation with the Greek and Latin masterpieces, than from all the manuals which flatter us with a promise of easy acquisition. It is to them we must go for a large series of experiments, which they made in attempting the distribution and balance of power, not the less instructive because they were so remarkably ignorant of that most philanthropic science, Political Economy, which, next to the Gospel, whose legitimate offspring it is, will do more than any thing else for the elevation and fraternization of our race. Their profound and indefatigably curious philosophical inquiries anticipated, as we said before, every question now vexed, except those suggested by the Scriptures. Aristotle's system of exact definition, nice analysis, and direct demonstration, governs the reasoning world. Plato, in richness of metaphor, nobleness of diction, and musical cadence, has never been approached; and an oration of Demosthenes carefully dissected, will show us better how to carry off an audience captive, than a thousand lectures on eloquence from scholastic chairs. No man should write a history, who has not pondered over the intense narrative of Thucydides; or biography, if he know not the Life of Agri-

cola almost by heart; or an essay, until familiar with those of Seneca, superfluous as they are in antithetical conceits. Homer, whom all have emulated, looks down from his dateless throne upon every epic adventurer. Horace, imitator as they say he was of Alcæus, has never found a successful rival. Milton (whose obligations to the classics a scholar detects through all his poetry), Dryden, Pope, Collins, and Gray, caught the fire and rhythm of their odes from Pindar. The pithy apothegms of Juvenal are our common proverbs. Where but in the dramas of Shakspeare, who alone lifts his head superior to ancient comparison, can we discover the tender grace of Euripides, the chastened grandeur of Sophocles, or the inexhaustible wit, facile play of words, and comic satire of Aristophanes? Where, even in Shakspeare, is there a conception like the Prometheus or Cassandra of Æschylus, who transcends our great master of the human heart by transcending the sphere of actual humanity?

But not to multiply instances, unnecessary before this audience, it may be confidently asserted that no high excellence in the arrangement or expression of thoughts, can be acquired without cultivating the ancients. A careful study of their languages is itself an education in strength, clearness, and delicacy of phrase, not merely because so much of our own has been taken from them, that we cannot understand it until we understand them, but because of their supe-



rior mechanism. The Greek is, in fact (with its supposed parent, the Sanscrit), the greatest and most mysterious achievement of human invention; for not only is its polish, which might be the work of progressive refinement, exquisite, but its radical principles are perfect in philosophical arrangement. He, who knows all things, alone knows how a system could have originated in those shadowy ages so accurate and complete, that the best style of modern tongues seems, by its side, rude and unregulated. We do not go too far in saying, that it exhibits, more fully than any thing else, the relations between thought and utterance, and that a thorough acquaintance with its construction is as necessary to the metaphysician as the critic.

To this, and, doubtless, springing from the same source, the Greeks added an intense love of beauty, a keen perception and severe ideas of it, which rendered their compositions simple and harmonious, yet grand or graceful; like their own inimitable sculptures, whose drapery was managed to reveal a symmetry that needed no decoration to conceal defects, but animated, breathing and energetic, from more than Promethean fire. Nothing can be more delightful to a literary mind, nothing more improving, than study of their chaste and highly-wrought Æstheticism. Happy is he who can bring skill in their art to the manifestation of those heavenly doctrines which open the fairest field for its exercise, and are

never so true as when presented in their own naked beauty! It is not the genuine scholar who becomes a pedant, nor the true philosopher who tampers with revealed certainties; but, while half-taught pretenders astound the multitude with sonorous polysyllables, or presumptuously venture their crude conjectures, (stigmatised by the learned apostle, as “philosophy falsely so called,”) the man of faith and knowledge employs his studious retirement and extensive means in distilling from foreign admixtures the waters of wisdom, that he may give them to the thirsty soul, pure, bright and transparent, as they came out of the fountain above. Nothing so much abases that pride which seeks self-distinction, as a sincere love of the true. Comparison with great ideas teaches us the insignificance of our powers, and then exalts us by the warranted ambition of securing our own glory through a submissive devotion to the glory of truth, which is the glory of God.

From these considerations, it follows that study should be governed by an elevated and religious spirit. Only three motives are allowed to us in any pursuit: the honour of the Lord our Creator, the well-being of our fellow creatures, and our own immortal happiness. These are so interlinked as to be inseparable. God, by the sanctions of his law and Gospel, justifies a regard to our own good, while he condemns selfishness, and makes service of our human brethren duty to himself, which cannot be loy-



ally rendered, except we find in it our greatest pleasure. The student, to be successful, must delight in his noble task. He will meet with many difficulties and disappointments. His toil will be severe and increasing. In themselves his trials will give him pain. Yet as the peasant sweats for bread, the soldier bleeds for honour, or the martyr suffers for his cause, he encounters and bears them all for the sake of the reward before him, until, after some determined practice and gratifying successes, he loves the very labour, and difficulty only rouses his generous courage. No man is fit to be a student unless he has a heart for study, a love of the beautiful and great in thought, stronger than any other passion, and an energy of will undaunted by any encounter. His calling and destiny are elsewhere. He may, according to his capacity, fill some lower place in the social economy, but the rank and inheritance of a scholar are not for him. Learning is jealous of all rivals, and spurns all who are too sluggish, or timid, or sordid, to undertake, dare or sacrifice every thing for her sake.

There are those, who claim to be men of letters, and perhaps of some note, who follow study for a trade, and make books or teach out of them, as tinmen make or pedlers sell the most common utensils, but would in a moment fling aside their scholarship, such as it is, to take up any handicraft that promised better wages. Perhaps we ought not to scourge

these money-changers from the temple, (though our fingers itch for the small cords,) because they may be useful in a degree; Providence employs the meanest and most ugly things; but, certainly, a tinker or a pedler, who loves his business, is incomparably more worthy of respect, than men who, with such advantages of knowledge, appreciate it only by the pence it brings them.

There are those, scarcely less mechanical, who lose the end of learning by attention to the minutiae of its detail, and see nothing in a classic but its words and accents. They will turn without emotion from the sobbing sentences in the last page of the *Phædon*, to luxuriate among the scholia at the bottom; or stop short in the prayer of *Iphigenia*, hanging on the knees of her father, that they may hunt for authorities about the suppliant wreath, to which she compares herself so touchingly. They too have their uses; but it is as stone-breakers on the highway of knowledge, or, at best, mere proof readers, who, the printers tell us, are more likely to be accurate the less they feel an author's meaning.

Others, again, are feverish with impatience to shine; and, since the beaten path is too much crowded by better men to allow them notoriety, they seek it in eccentric and venturesome novelties. Like *Erostratus*, they would fire the most sacred system to gain a name, and careless of consequences, abuse the gifts of God within them, to set the crowd agape.

Such men are very mischievous, and the more so the more learning they have, as a skilful chemist, if malignant enough, would be the most adroit poisoner.

There are yet those, who eagerly enjoy the pleasures of study without any regard for the advantage of others; too intent upon learning to teach, and upon reading to write; absorbed from all thought of the living in their association with the dead. God has given them talent and opportunity to store their minds with richest treasures, but in miserly niggardliness they keep them locked from the world. None are wiser for their knowledge, and the Father of lights receives from them no tribute of praise. Heavy will be their responsibility in that hour, when the guilt of neglecting to do good shall be measured by the means granted to accomplish it.

But the office of the educated is to be benefactors of their race. While we love study for its own sake, we should love it far more for the sake of the faculties it gives us to exercise the highest form of beneficence. Reputation for talent and acquirements, because it increases our power, may fairly be desired, and, within proper limits, sought. An intellectual labourer is not less entitled to remuneration for his work, than those who till the earth or ply the loom. Whatever in our studies refines our taste, improves our manners, or quickens our sensibilities, is to be cherished, because, though the effect be not immediately seen, it prepares us for greater success when

we attempt to do good. Yet usefulness to man for the glory of God, should be the student's ruling purpose. That alone can maintain in us an unconquerable courage, lift us above the dangerous temptations within and around, and, purifying our thoughts from selfish and sensual defilement, sanctify our understanding for that eternal sphere, where charity never fails, though tongues shall cease and knowledge vanish away. The heart, not the reason, is the most noble part of the soul.

It would, however, be a grave mistake to draw knowledge only from books. Human nature, in all ages, is radically the same. Books help us to understand mankind, and intercourse with mankind helps us to understand books. A theory, which, when read, we think right or wrong, may be proved the reverse by a half hour's observation of actual life; as, on the other hand, what the superficial infer with ready confidence from a few obvious facts, may be utterly opposed by the results of a longer trial, recorded in the histories of the past. The world is a busy laboratory, where experiments are constantly going on, by which we should try our hypotheses, and gather facts for farther induction, else we shall be dupes of fantastic speculation, and bring, as others have done before us, ridicule upon scholarship. There is, it is true, much folly in the assumption of superior judgment, by some who claim to be practical men, over those they sarcastically call



theorists. What were your practical men without the aid of theorists? A practical blacksmith may make a lightning-rod that saves a house from destruction, but the theorist, Franklin, first showed the world how to turn aside the thunderbolts of heaven. A practical seaman may easily navigate a ship, but, first, Napier gave him logarithms, and Godfrey his quadrant, and Bowditch taught him how to use them, and older theorists discovered and made plain the higher principles. The practical man, on errands of business, may shoot along a railway, after the surveyor and engineer have done their work and the locomotive has been made, when, but for them, his utmost speed would be in a horse's legs. The illustration holds good in trade, politics, morals and every thing, that affects the comforts or interests of the race. Still, without practical observation, the most ingenious reasoning is hypothesis that has not gained the strength of theory, nor, until put to the test, can theory have the value of law.

It is thus with us, when we would turn our knowledge derived from learning to a useful account. To make men better, it is not enough that we demonstrate what they ought to be; we must know and consider what they are. We may imagine for them a state of health, but our business is with them in a state of disease, which we must understand before we can apply any remedies. Learning gives us a wider range of facts than he has, who can look only

upon his little narrow present, and we have all the benefit of former experience in failures or success; but we also need the actual around us. Neither Owen nor Fourier is an original genius. Abstract philosophers of all times have been fond of picturing a perfect social system. Pythagoras made a grand mistake in social organization at Crotona, and John Locke framed the exploded constitution of South Carolina; nor would any Utopia, from Plato's to Sir Thomas Moore's, succeed better. Common sense, that most uncommon thing, which is nothing else than a shrewd application of ascertained principles to things as they are, should temper our philosophical ambition.

Let us, then, never think a day's study done, unless we have added to our knowledge from reading, something more from society and conversation. Our nature is social; and much seclusion from the world is unhealthy for mind and heart. A famous scholar recommends a companion even in study, that each may assist the other with his peculiar gifts or attainments, and because of the stimulus which mind receives from mind when brought into contact. We know, by experience, that to talk over a subject with a sensible friend is a sure way, not only to acquire ideas from him, but to call them up from our own resources. The impulse follows us back to our desks, and we set ourselves again to our work, as cheerfully as we would to pleasant food after a long walk in an agreeable country. But we should not confine



ourselves to literary associates. The conversation of intelligent women, if you can find any not too much afraid of being thought "blue stockings" to talk, is eminently instructive. They have a delicacy of tact, a truth of feeling, and a direct philosophy of their own, past our finding out, which the most profound thinker may listen to and learn. The natural outworking of a little child's mind is an excellent metaphysical study. So, often, are the rough-hewn ideas of uneducated people. From the most ignorant you may extract something. Their crude reasonings, unsophisticated emotions, and even their prejudices and superstitions, will not seldom supply a link wanting from your own chain, or, if they do no more, should make us thankful for being better taught.

There is danger, however, that the student may be distracted from his great purpose, by the various excitements with which the popular mind so often becomes vertiginous. "*Semel insanivimus omnes*," says the proverb; but it might say "*semper*," with the verb in the present; for men are ever prone to phrenzy, and, like drunkards, are not nice as to the character of a stimulant, if it be strong enough to intoxicate. Perhaps a new moral nostrum demands universal faith, as a wonder-working cure of evil, hidden until now from prophet, apostle and sage; or some metaphysical Rosicrucian has invented a formula, by which all mysteries may be resolved into

“Easy lessons of one syllable;” or a political contest nearly divides the national vote, each party vehemently asserting that the other half of the citizenship are knaves or fools, who will, if successful, certainly blow up the confederacy; or a damsel, put to sleep by the intensity of another’s will, is straightway “possessed of a spirit of divination,” reads books out of the back of her head, makes excursions to the moon, and “brings her masters much gain by soothsaying;” or the world is coming to an end; or “the heavens shine supernaturally, and an ox has spoken.” But why attempt to enumerate the proximate causes of these epidemics? If it were not one thing, it would be another. The disease is in human nature. It is difficult to avoid the infection, when, if we remain calm or aloof, we are denounced as cold, averse to progress, indifferent to the welfare of our race, irreligious, even impious; and meet at every corner enthusiasts, wild as Thyades,

. . . ubi audito stimulant trieterica Baccho  
Orgia, nocturnusque vocat clamore Cithæron.

But do not suffer yourselves to be moved from your onward studies. History, as you know, is full of such instances. The Scripture, “given by inspiration of God,” “that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,” has scarcely left any ethical secret to be discovered by the genius of our late philanthropy. The inner rows

of old European libraries are crowded with volumes of eager controversy, painfully written upon questions, the very mention of which now excites pitiful laughter. Our beloved country has ten times multiplied her strength, and promises more fairly than ever to survive the results of general elections. Mesmerism, or something very like it, is as old as Aristotle, if we may believe a fragment of Proclus.\* The earth has crushed many Millers, and will crush many more, in her revolutions to attain her final destiny; while every page of *Julius Obsequens de Prodigiiis*, will give the pattern of any alleged eccentricity from common laws.

Neither have the vanity to think that you can do any thing to oppose or correct the prevailing madness. Wait (and you need not wait long) till the paroxysm be over. You cannot put a straight jacket on a whole community, though they may send you

\* "That it is possible for the soul to depart from and enter into the body, is evident from him who, according to Clearchus, in his *Treatise on Sleep*, used a soul-attracting wand on a sleeping lad, and persuaded Aristotle that the soul may be separated from the body, and that it enters into the body and uses it as a lodging. For, striking the lad with the wand, he drew out, and, as it were, led his soul, for the purpose of evincing that the body was immoveable, when the soul was at a distance from it, and that it was preserved uninjured; but the soul being led again into the body, by means of the wand, after its entrance, narrated every particular." The MS. Commentary of Proclus on the Tenth Book of the Republic, quoted by Taylor in his *Fragments of Proclus*. The translation does not seem precise or happy. Those who have Taylor's translation of the Republic at hand, may find the original among the notes.

to Bedlam for the attempt. A wise man, when it storms, does not stay to chide the north wind, or reason with the hail, but quietly shuts himself up in his library. He will not think that the sky is falling, because the black electric clouds are thundering low and loud. He knows that, as the clear stars are shining on behind the tumults of our mundane atmosphere, the great principles of truth are fixed, radiant and harmonious. Be this your faith and your practice; then, at the proper season, you may do good to the errorist, blushing over his follies, who would never forgive you, if he knew that you had been near when the fit was on him. It would have been well for him who gives this counsel, if he had always followed his own rule. *Piscator ictus sapit.*

Still, there is such an intimate connexion between them, that our reason cannot act rightly, at least upon moral questions, except our hearts be cultivated. We must learn from sympathy with our kind what our nature really is; and mark how our common passions, infirmities, and sinful tendencies develope themselves in circumstances differing from those in which we are placed. There is a little world in every man's breast, and his life is an abridged history of the race. We shall find much to shock us, and, therefore, to humble us; but also much to pity and love, which will make us more kind. We shall think worse of human nature in general, but become less uncharitable toward erring



individuals; and feel more strongly the obligation upon us to do all we can for the removal of evil, while we are driven to dependence upon the grace of God for success. The best teacher that ever taught, took upon Him our nature, that from a personal sense of our infirmities in his human heart, which ached with all our sorrows, his divine wisdom might succour us according to our temptations. His example shows, that separateness from sinners is not seclusion from the world, and that, although we are to come out from it, we must mingle with our fellow-men to do them good. The rule of the Christian should be the method of the student.

Scarcely less necessary to soundness of mind are good personal habits. Compounded as we are of matter and spirit, the soul energizing through animal organs, the mind is always hurtfully affected by an ill-condition of body, or greatly assisted by its well-ordered vigour. Care of his health is, therefore, a student's duty, not only because unfaithfulness to a charge so precious would be a degree of suicide, but because without it his intellectual faculties will be weakened and deranged. We hear every day of studious men, breaking down, as it is called, from the supposed effects of application to books; and many are deterred from mental labour by fear of shortening their lives. If slender, they think themselves too feeble for literary toil; if robust, requiring more active employment. But the truth is, there are



very few instances of health destroyed by study itself. Too scanty use of water, want of proper exercise, and excess of food, are the chief causes of those morbid affections which trouble zealous scholars. Different temperaments and constitutions demand different treatment, but every one should adapt his regimen to his circumstances. It is preposterous to spend eight or ten hours a day in a library, and live like a ploughman or a courtier.

A student often complains of an unaccountable dulness, when, with every disposition to apply himself, he can accomplish nothing, and his brain seems in a fog of confused ideas. Perhaps, on inquiring of his memory, he will be told, that for many days past he has washed only his face and hands, as if the show of cleanliness were the end of it. In such cases, of all remedies for his stupidity, water is the best, especially if he add to it a common compound of oil and alkali, and apply it briskly by an equally common, bristly implement. He will rise from his bath renovated, with a consciousness, next to a good conscience the most happy, of having done his person as much justice as the laundress does his linen, who plunges not only those parts which will be visible, but the whole, in a capacious vessel,\* nor ceases her exertions until the cleansing be thorough and complete. Every pore being thus unclogged, and

\* "*Labrum* si in balineo non est, (fac) ut sit." CIC. Ep. ad Terentiam, 20.

the action of the skin stimulated, the mind, which was sluggish for want of free breathing, will be cheerful and bright, the fancy active, the reason vigorous, and the judgment clear. He has gained time instead of losing it, by his lustration. The fountain Hippocrene was but twenty stadia from the residence of the muses.\*

Another serious error is the neglect of physical exercise in a proper degree and kind. A shrewd observer of his countrymen has remarked, that Americans work hard only their brains and their stomachs, by which fact he accounts for the attenuation and angularity of form so frequent among us. It is difficult for the student to turn away from his books, when life is so short and science so vast; but it is poor economy to save a few hours by unfitting ourselves for future exertions. Many imagine that they do take pains in this respect, though, very often, after the consequences of former neglect have been fastened upon them; but, even then, the method of exercise is not adapted to the purpose. Sawing wood in a cellar, swinging heavy weights in a room, or dragging themselves through long aimless walks, seems rather to fatigue the limbs than agitate the whole system. Besides, the train of thought still

\* The reader will find this subject admirably treated in a volume on Baths, by an eminent medical authority—Doctor John Bell, of Philadelphia, whom the author has the honour to number among his kindest and most valued friends.

goes on, there is nothing in such employment to relieve the mind, and the student returns unrefreshed, even tired, less disposed than before to the task of "taking exercise." Exercise, to be of service, must be enjoyed, and to be enjoyed, must have some aim, no matter what, so that it be innocent, which will occupy our thoughts pleasantly. There is a most perniciously false public opinion among us, which looks upon athletic amusements as undignified for intellectual men, and almost wicked for clergymen. People would be shocked to see grave black-coated personages engaged, like school-boys, in a game of ball, or contending with each other in pitching quoits; yet an occasional, even frequent, exercise of some such sort, would save many a promising young man from an early tomb, and prolong the usefulness of many prematurely old. "All work and no play," is as poor a maxim for the adult as the child; it makes the one dull as it does the other; for we are but "children of a larger growth." Constant sedentariness impairs the action of mind. Our thoughts become too abstract, unnatural, and often gloomy. The brain takes the tone of the stomach. Some starve it, thereby to obviate the necessity of exercise, and grow light-headed or visionary; others overload it, and grow confused, melancholic, or ill-tempered. It has been observed, that wars involving lasting mischief to great nations, have arisen from a ministerial despatch having been written during a fit

of indigestion. Dryden's favourite inspiration, when wishing to do better than usual, was a strong saline draught; and a very eminent English statesman resorted to a similar mode of clearing his head. It is more than probable that hurtful theories are often promulged in books, whose authors labour under similar difficulties without taking means to remove them, which pleasant out-door exercise might do. If so, to abstain from it is a sin against ourselves and the world.

Here is the secret of that sound, clear-headed vigour, for which Scotch intellect is so notable. The Oxford and Cambridge fellows and doctors, seldom stirring beyond the limits of their shaded quadrangles, or moving but in the slow-paced dignity of gown and office, reason for the actual world, of which they know little and cannot sympathize with, from mediæval precedents, or patristical authorities, and turn up their vellum-coloured noses at all who will not swear in the words of their masters. The German scholar, scarcely less confined to academic limits, will most likely famish on a biscuit a-day, or gorge himself with sour-cROUT and black beer, though working two-thirds of the twenty-four hours, the effects of which, among immense contributions to learning, are seen in thoughts drawn out to their utmost ductility, or in heavy lucubrations upon minute particulars. But the Scotch, even when gray with age, lays his volume or pen aside, gladly



to join in his ancestral game of *golf*, or to *curl* the stone upon the ice, or following the clear stream, to fill his creel with finny spoils; and returns to his books, sturdy in body and happy in spirit.

It may not be so with feeble constitutions, but for those in health violent exercise before study is not advisable. The excitement is too high, and the hand trembles as its fingers close upon the pen. Still, occasions should be sought to put every muscle into full action. Among out-door recreations, none has been a greater favourite with studious men of Great Britain, because none is more suited to quiet habits, fondness for retirement, and love of nature, than angling, not in the sea, but in brooks or rivers, where the genus *Salmo* abounds. A catalogue of men illustrious in every department of knowledge, who have refreshed themselves for farther useful toil by this "gentle art," as its admirers delight to call it, would be very long; and those who would charge them with trifling, perhaps worse, might, with some modesty, reconsider a censure which must include Izaak Walton, the pious biographer of pious men; Dryden, Thomson, Wordsworth, and many more among the poets; Paley, Wollaston, and Nowell, among theologians; Henry Mackenzie (the Man of Feeling), and Professor Wilson, the poet, scholar and essayist; Sir Humphrey Davy, author of *Salmonia*; Emerson the geometrician; Rennie the zoologist; Chantrey the sculptor, and a host of others, who prove



that such a taste is not inconsistent with religion, genius, industry or usefulness to mankind. It has been remarked, that they, who avail themselves of this exercise moderately (for as one says, "make not a profession of a recreation, lest it should bring a cross wish on the same,"\*) and are temperate, attain, generally, an unusual age. Henry Jenkins lived to a hundred and sixty-nine years, and angled when a score past his century; Walton died upwards of ninety; Nowell at ninety-five, and Mackenzie at eighty-six. "Such frequent instances of longevity among anglers," says a writer on the subject, "cannot have been from accident, or from their having originally stronger stamina than other mortals. Their pursuits by the side of running streams, whose motion imparts increased vitality to the air, their exercise regular without being violent, and that composure of mind so necessary to the health of the body, to which this amusement so materially contributes, must all have had an influence upon their physical constitution, the effect of which is seen in the duration of their lives."†

Studious men, who live in the country, are more advantageously situated; but he, who is pent up in

\* Experienced Angler, by Col. Robert Venables (afterwards Commander in chief of the Parliamentary forces in Ulster). London, 1662. Chap. X. Obs. 23.

† Scenes and Recollections of Fly Fishing, &c., by Stephen Oliver, the Younger, p. 25.

a town, vexed by the excitements of the day, and driven, in spite of himself, to late and irregular hours, could get profit every way, if at times he would seek the purer air, free from the city's smoke, and with his rod as a staff, climb the hills, and ply his quiet art in the brooks that wash the mountain side, or wander through the green valleys, shaded by the willow and the tasselled alder: "Atte the leest," says the Lady Juliana Berners, "he hath his holsome walke and mery at his ease; a swete ayre of the swete savoure of the meede floures, that makyth hym hungry. He heereth the melodyous armony of fowles. He seeth the yonge swannes, heerons, duckes, cotes, and many other fowles, wyth theyr brodes. And yf he take fysshe; surely, thenne, is there noo man merier than he is in his spyryte."\* Nor should he forget the best of books in his pocket, and a few well-chosen jewels of truth to give away, as he enjoys the simple fare of some upland cottage, or chats with the secluded inmates during the soft twilight, before he asks a blessing upon the household for the

\* *The Treatyse of Fysshynge wpyth an Angler*, (attributed, though erroneously, to Dame Julian de Berners, Prioress of Sopewell Nunnery in Herefordshire,) first printed by Wynkyn de Worde in the Boke of St. Albans, 1496, forty-four years before the first classic (Tully's Epistles) was printed at Oxford. It was from this treatise that Izaak Walton took the hint and plan for his well known "Complete Angler," a hundred and fifty years later; and, as the editor of Pickering's edition says, "In piety and virtue; in the inculcation of morality; in an ardent love for the art, and still more in that placid and Christian spirit for which the amiable Walton was so conspicuous, the early writer was scarcely his inferior."

night. After a few days of such communion, *sibi et Deo*, among the pleasant works of his Maker, and a grateful sense of rustic hospitality, he will go home a more healthy man in mind, body and heart. This advice is given soberly, earnestly and conscientiously, as the fruit of experience. If any should follow it, and be afterwards chided for wasting time by those who prefer dyspepsia to common sense, let no answer be given. A sour stomach, and, its miserable accompaniment, a sour temper, are their own punishment.

No exercise, however, that a student can use, will counteract the effects of much animal food. An error of the people in this country, more than in any other civilized part of the globe, is being too carnivorous. Other persons may decide for themselves as they choose, but we should be content with a simple diet, nutritious, yet as little stimulating as possible. The command to Peter, "Kill and eat," is a sufficient refutation of those pretenders to be wise above what is written, who, because their own gastric functions are as weak as their brains, would reduce all men to bran bread and slops; but meat more than once a day should not pass a student's lips, and not much then. According to modern notions, the end of temperance is to keep people from getting drunk; the apostle Paul thought it to be, "keeping the body under;" but what right has he, who eats heartily of meat at breakfast, repeats the enormity at dinner, and again at supper, to expect that his

humours will not be thick, his brain muddy, his passions insurgent, and his ideas gross; especially, if he sit at his desk for many hours? This indulgence of appetite is, in nine cases out of ten, at the bottom of the student's brain fever or disordered digestion. Many commence their studies when past early youth, after having practised some trade or active calling, and, anxious to overtake time, they devote themselves with unremitting zeal to their books, but do not change their habits at table. Nay, not aware that, from sympathy of the stomach with the brain, mental industry produces a morbid appetite, they eat with increased voracity. Soon their colour grows sallow, their shoulders stoop from lassitude, they become emaciated and sad, make some sickly efforts to do good, and then creep into an early grave. "Poor fellow!" exclaim the friendly mourners, "he died a victim of studious zeal." No such thing! Let the epitaph-maker chisel upon the stone, for the warning of others, "Died of too much meat."

Nature teaches us better. All summer long she gives us a succession of fresh fruits and vegetables, leaving for our winter's store others which last us till summer comes again. The charter to Noah, the wisdom of which we may not doubt, did include animal food; but we should remember that the diet of man in Paradise and purity, was wholly vegetable.

This also, if you will take it, is the advice of one who has been himself, for years, a close student, at

times an excessive student, and what is most trying of all, a night student; yet, with a constitution much better fitted to sling a sledge or follow a plough, he has never experienced any serious inconvenience, fairly attributable to study; which, he thinks, is owing to a very simple and moderate, but not whimsically abstemious, diet, particularly as to the use of animal food.

Gentlemen, much more might be said in vindication of our pursuits, but it would be unfair to tax your courteous patience any farther. Ours is indeed a noble calling. All antiquity speaks to us; let us speak to all posterity. What we have received from God, it would impoverish us to withhold, but will enrich us to impart. Let it be our constant care to cultivate the best wisdom, that, as we receive light from on high, we may, in our turn, shed the true light upon the world around us. In a little while, the fashions, the riches, the empty pleasures, and the tinsel honours of this life, will have passed away. We can carry with us into eternity nothing, of which the soul is not the treasury. We shall never all meet together again in this world; but we shall meet before the Judgment. Then may each of us be able to present, through the Intercessor, something done by His grace, worthy of our immortal powers, useful to our fellow-men, and glorifying to our Maker! God bless you!











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